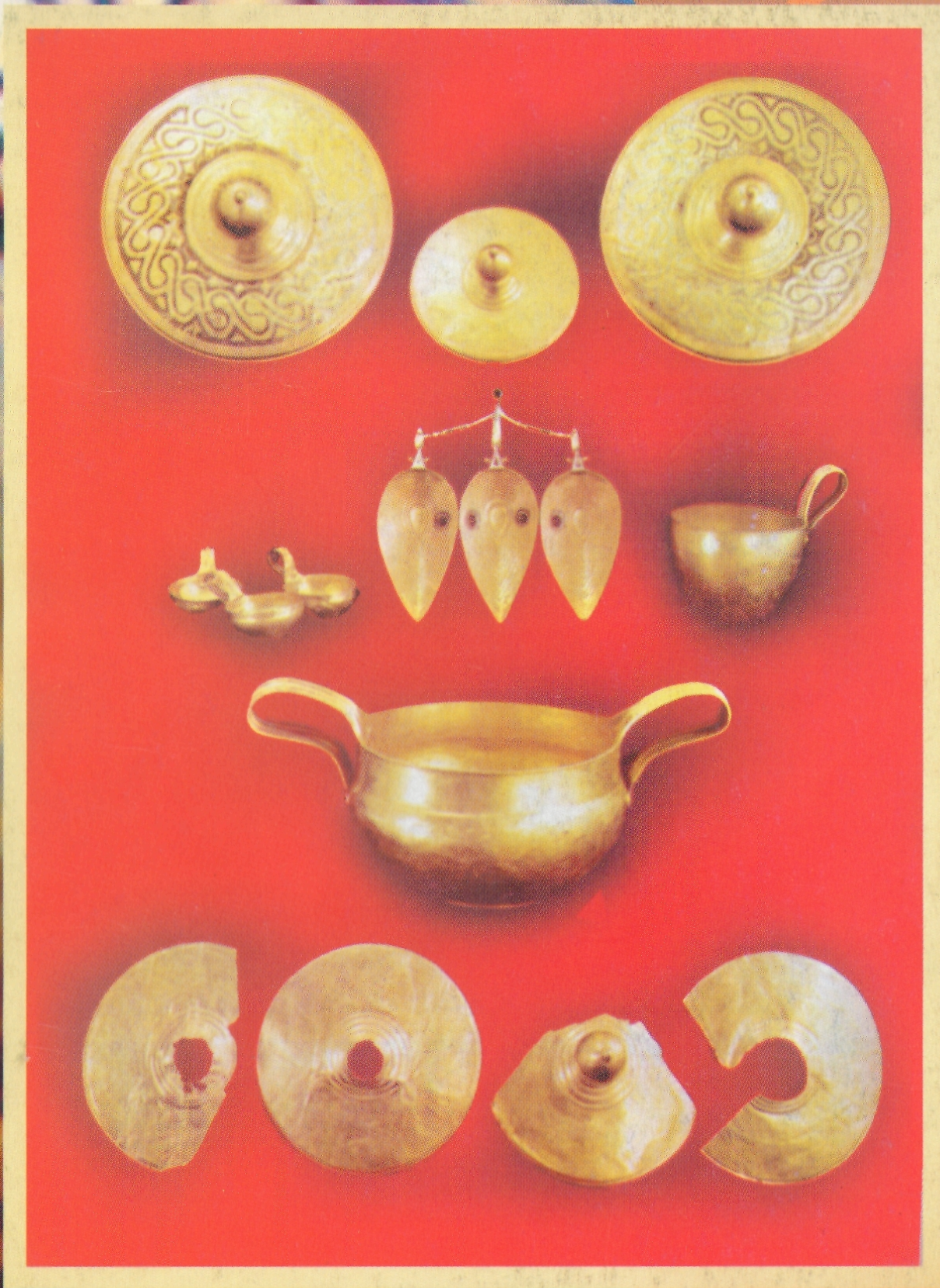


Емануил Петков
**ПАНАГЮРСКОТО
И ВЪЛЧИТРЪНСКОТО
ЗЛАТНО СЪКРОВИЩЕ**



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**PANAGYURISHT
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GOLD TREASURES**

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ODRISIAN THRACIAN KINGDOM**

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*On the cover: Vulchitrún gold treasure (front)
Panagyurishte gold treasure (back)*

A well known fact described in Herodot's "History"¹ is that about the year 513 BC Darius I ventured his Scythian campaign beyond the Danube (Istros) and across the tribal lands of the Thracians, including those of the Odrisae and Getae.

After a 60-day chase, in which the Scythians avoided direct battle but used the tactics of "burnt land and poisoned water", Darius felt disappointed from his lack of success and terminated his military campaign.

On his way back across the Thracian territories he reflected that only if the Hemus mountain passes, which seemed to be very similar to those in the mountains of Northern Iran, were closed and strictly protected, they might stop an eventual inrush of the huge masses of Scythian horsemen towards the Bosphorus and Dardanel, which could jeopardize his plans to unite the civilized European world with Persian Empire. Therefore, already at that time, he ordered his general Megabaz to take over the Thracian sea coast between Hemus (Stara Planina) and the Straits.

Various circumstances delayed the progress of his European policies and they began to be realized as late as the year 492, when he sent his son-in-law Mardonius as commander of a crack-troop army corps of 150 thousand Mydians to conquer the North Aegean sea coast. A second task assigned to Mardonius was to start negotiations with the Thracian tribal aristocracy whose lands were spreading south of the Balkan (Hemus), and to persuade them to unite their neighbouring kingdoms by promising that for this act the Persian Empire would provide generous support. In this connection, it is important to note that ample positive experience had already been acquired in connection with the founding of the Vitynian Thracian Kingdom in the north-west part of Asia Minor, which survived until 75 BC, when the Romans made it their province.

In the attempt to make the realization of his objectives easier, Mardonius stationed his principal military camp in the immediate neighbourhood and

* This paper is a summary of a more extensive study on the origin and history of the Thracian ethnos.



Fig. 1. Silver coins from Derronykon (Dorisk), by J. Youroukova.

at the right bank of the river Hebros (Maritsa). Very soon this camp acquired the appearance of a town and was named DERRONYKON, in honour of the Persian king. This knowledge can be learned from the coins produced there in accordance with the Persian weight equivalent, silver coins with a high nominal price (Fig. 1). According to data quoted by Prof. I. Youroukova², some of these coins have been found in a number of treasures originating from ancient Egypt and Phoenicia. Maybe they were used to pay freight charges for cargo ships and for the shipment of goods and equipment. The iconography on the obverse corresponds to the worshipping of Akhuramis, a deity that was believed to have created man and bovine at one and the same time³. The additional obverse signs of an eagle holding a crocodile and an octagonal star in its beak and surrounded by an halo of dots, signifies that initially the military corps consisted of Mydians, which were later replaced by Assyrians. The fact that these coins were unquestionably minted in Derronykon (Dorisk) is proved by the distinctive sign at the reverse of the coins - triskeles, not to be found anywhere else among the characteristic signs of the known coin mints on the Thracian coast.

After almost 2 years of negotiations on the formulation of the arrangements and mutual responsibilities, success was finally achieved and in the spring of 490 BC Darius arrived in Derronykon (Dorisk) to proclaim solemnly the concurrent birth of four Thracian kingdoms of the Thiniae, Edonae, Bysaltae and Odrisae.

Because of the firm grip of the Persian occupation on all riverside settlements, the time and place of this event was not confirmed by the ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides who lived and worked in the 5th century BC. We can only judge about it by the minted coins with iconography similar to the Persian style and of value in accordance with the Persian weight equivalent, as well as by some more recent data about their existence.

Fortunately enough for the history of the illiterate Thracian tribes, this solemn act was elucidated and revealed by the Vulchitrun (found in 1924) and Panagyurishte (found in 1949) gold treasures, which are direct evidence and documents for the formal constituting of the Odrisian Kingdom.

This conclusion was drawn after a thorough study of the ideological meaning ingrained in the different components of these treasures and of the gold treasures as an entity. The stylistic features of their elaboration were also taken into consideration. In the process of searching some historical information from ancient time was found which enabled the understanding of such questions as where and why they were made.

Thus, in the spring of 490 BC, at the formal ritual of proclaiming the Odrisian Kingdom, Darius I ceremoniously attributed to the Odrisian tribal chief the Panagyurishte gold treasure as a sign of his royal dignity and standing. In his talentfully written "History of the Ancient East", V. I. Avdiev⁴ tells that in the Persian Kingdom, and from then on in the Odrisian Kingdom, only a king had the right to possess and deal with gold. Hence the conclusion of the personal involvement of Darius in the celebration was drawn.

The ritual of establishing the royal institution was followed by a formal establishing the order of government, in which the king was the supreme ruler, and there was an autonomous rule of three para-dynasts equal in rank, and the Vulchitrun treasure was used for the ceremony. First, the Odrisian king took in succession the umbo of each one of the 4 disk-shaped vessels (shown on the lower line on the front cover), than filled it with the 3-element spoon the different kind of food in them and offered it simultaneously to the mouths of the para-dynasts standing in front of him. Swallowing the food, they solemnly swore that from then on the corn, domestic animals, hunt and fish will be common ownership under the supreme rule of the king. The umbo, which is convex in the centre, is the symbol of the centralized supreme power of the king, and the three concentric circles around its base signify the unity of the para-dynasts with the king and the fact that they acknowledge his superiority.*

*Considering the supporting structures mounted on the internal side of the disk-shaped vessels, providing strength against strain, one might suggest that they were housing some wooden or ceramic vessels in which the ritual matter was put. However, as the gold treasure was hidden in the earth at a time of flight (most probably during the invasion of Philip of Macedonia), the inner vessels have been abandoned as they did not possess the worth of gold.

In the next ritual (see the centre of the front cover), the king scooped with the big cup from the water in the 2-handle crater and filled the three smaller cups which the para-dynasts were holding in their hands. Drinking it they swore that from then on the water shall become common property in the kingdom and that it was under the supreme rule of the king. Here once again the three concentric rings under the edges of the small cups stand for their equal position and their unity within the kingdom and with the king.

These component parts of the Vulchitrun gold treasure symbolized the unification of LAND AND WATER in the kingdom. In the figurative conception one can feel the presence of Darius I. Thus it became a sworn document declaring the unification of the Thracian tribes into one state, since the water and land were commonly owned. The Vulchitrun treasure, together with the Panagyurishte gold treasure, is *de jure* a document certifying the founding of the Odrisian Kingdom.

The 3 other disk-shaped vessels (see the upper part of the front cover), were used in the formal ritual of concluding the union between the Persian Empire and the Odrisian Kingdom.

The two kings then carried their identical vessels to the mouth of each other and sipping from the oath drink "khaoma"⁵, they pronounced the words of the oath, symbolically coded in the belt with ornaments at the external side of the vessels shaped by means of silver forged in the gold base. Scrutinizing the ornaments on the internal peripheral edge of the belt (at the side of the umbo), one can note (in gold) a series of small rhomboids divided into small arcs, which represent stylized the heads and leafs of the flowers, a symbol of peace. Along the external peripheral (again in gold) circle of ornament one can see triangles, a stylized presentation of arrow points, a sign of war. In the middle part of the belt, the continuous run of the waves of time is stylized in gold and silver, with its good and bad fluctuations. Deciphering the symbolic meaning in a likewise manner, the solemn words of the oath of the two kings would sound as follows: "FROM NOW ON (FOR TIMES ETERNAL) IN GOOD AND BAD TIMES, IN WAR AND PEACE: IN UNION FOREVER". After pronouncing the oath, a priest of the Sun offered them to drink khaoma in the small gold disk-shaped vessel, by which act they confirmed that the oath was sworn before the supreme deity - the Sun, worshipped with equal devotion by both Persians and Thracians.

While the meaning of the three rings around the umbo of the Odrisian king's vessel is already clarified, in the one of the Persian king they mean that his lands are stretching on the three then known continents: Asia, Africa and Europe. The three circles around the umbo of the God of the Sun signify that it is shining in like manner over the Persian and Thracian lands.

In the deeply symbolic meaning embedded the elaboration of the Vulchitrun gold treasure the ideological authorship of Darius I is felt

unambiguously. It is most near the truth to suppose that it was from Derronykon, immediately after the ceremonies, that the Persian king sent his delegates to the small Greek states to ask for LAND AND WATER, so that he might have enough time during that same year 490 BC after learning about the offensive and cruel acts against his envoys in Athens and Sparta, to order the punitive naval expedition that led to the burning of Erythrea and the lost battle at Marathon.



There is another important testimony for the fact that Darius has been on Thracian land in 490 BC. This is the coin found in the village Sadovik in the district of Pernik and mentioned by Prof. I. Youroukova⁶, under catalogue No. 1 (Fig. 2). Because of its characteristics, it is justifiable to accept it as being a commemorative coin minted in honour of his presence there. On its obverse stamp the name of the town Derronykon is replaced by DERRI which is equal to Darius, because according to the philologist V. Georgiev⁷ the long "A" becomes "E" with the Thracians.*

We will contemplate in brief on another very significant point. Why did Darius I have to hand over to the Odrisian sovereign a gold treasure exclusive by the mastery of art, which was however without even the smallest resemblance to the traditions of Thracian toreutics?

We were directed towards the correct answer by texts on p. 483 of the work of V. I. Avdiev⁸, which we are quoting: "... From the inscription of the Egyptian chief priest to the temple of the Goddess Neith in Sahis, Oudjakhorecent, we learn that after conquering Egypt, Cambyz continued the policy his father Cirrus used to maintain in conquered countries. He not only refrained to repress the Egyptian religion but quite the reverse, judging by the inscription of Oudjakhorecent, he even looked for the support of certain aristocratic circles of the priesthood who preferred to reach agreements with the Persians... Oudjakhorecent proudly notified that upon his request Cambyz had ordered to drive away all Asians who had settled in the Neith temple and to destroy all their houses in this temple ... to wash the temple clean, to bring back all its people and priests on hourly duty. His Majesty ordered to make gifts and sacrifices to Neith, the great mother of the great

*Evidence in this respect can be found among the phials of the Rogozen treasure, where on those under No. 42 and 46 the engraver has hammered "ΑΡΓΙΣΚΗΣ", on No. 44: "ΕΡΓΙΣΚΗΣ", and on No. 43 "ΗΡΓΙΣΚΗΣ".

Gods who are in Sahis, as it was before." Oudjakhorecent relates that "CAMBYZ TOOK OVER AN OLD EGYPTIAN NAME AND THE TITLE OF PHARAOH AND WAS TAUGHT IN THE RELIGIOUS MYSTERIES OF GODDESS NEITH."

A thorough analysis of the individual details of the Panagyurishte gold treasure (on the back cover) leads to the conclusion that it is the treasure that was given to Cambyz as a symbol of his elevation to the dignity of Pharaoh. Here are the facts upon which this conclusion is based:

The phiale with small negroes' heads symbolizes that he is ruler of Nubia (now Sudan) where the population has Negroid features.

The rhyton in the form of a ram's head signifies that Cambyz rules Upper Egypt with the capital city of Thebes. The principal god RA was worshipped and depicted there in the shape of a ram⁹ (Fig. 3).

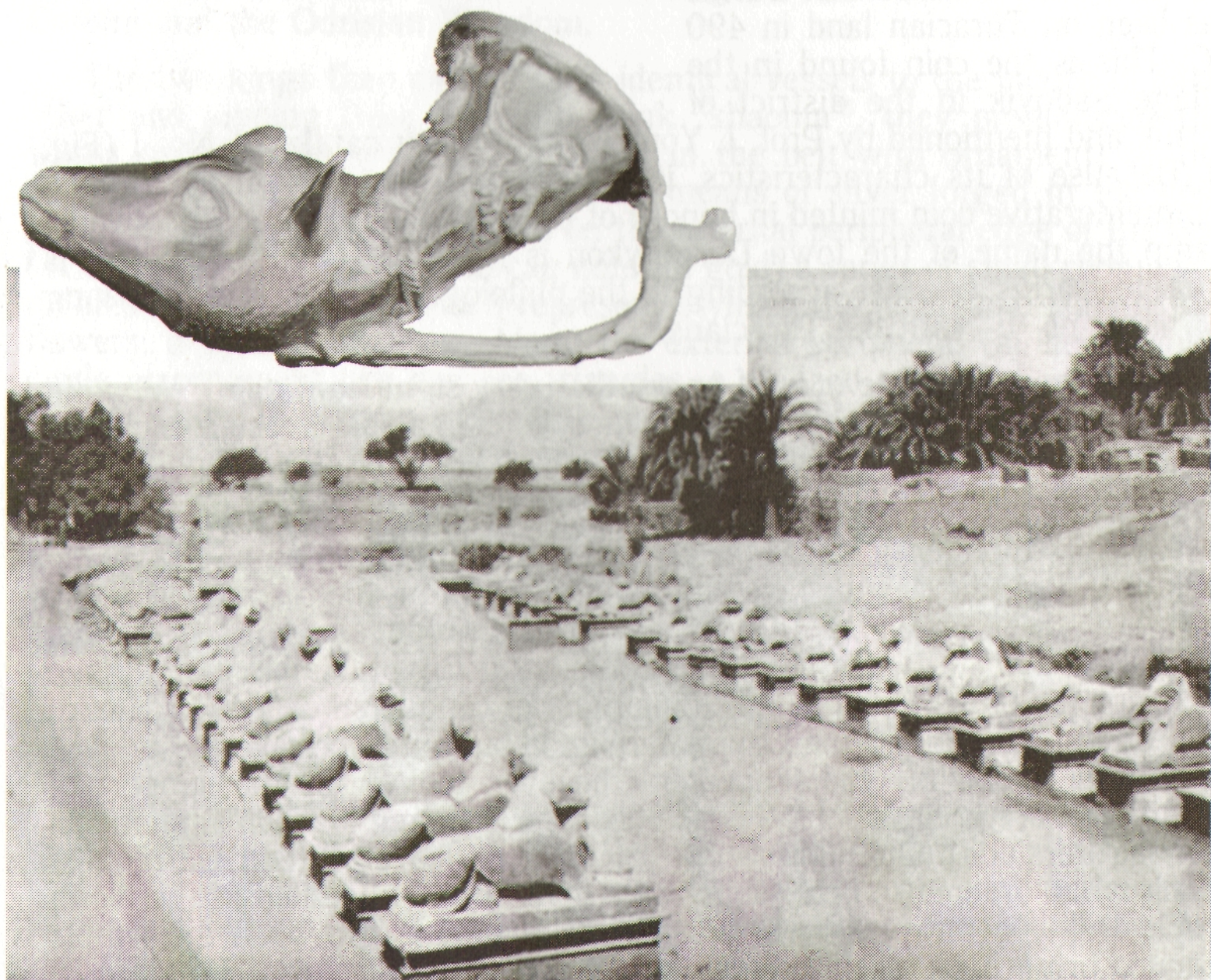


Fig. 3. The golden ram from the Panagyurishte treasure. The holy rams from the Amon Rha temple in Thebes, 18 dyn. (V. Avdiev).



Fig. 4. The golden goat from Panagyurishte. The silver rhyton with he-goat protome belonged to the satrap of the Persian king in Lower Egypt in Vth century BC (by J. Wiesner). Found in the Persian capital Souza. On the periphery of the rython one can see typical for Egypt spikes and lotus blossoms.

The rhyton ending in the protome of a goat indicates that he also commands Lower Egypt with its capital Memphis. The chief deity Rah was revered there as a he-goat¹⁰ (Fig. 4).

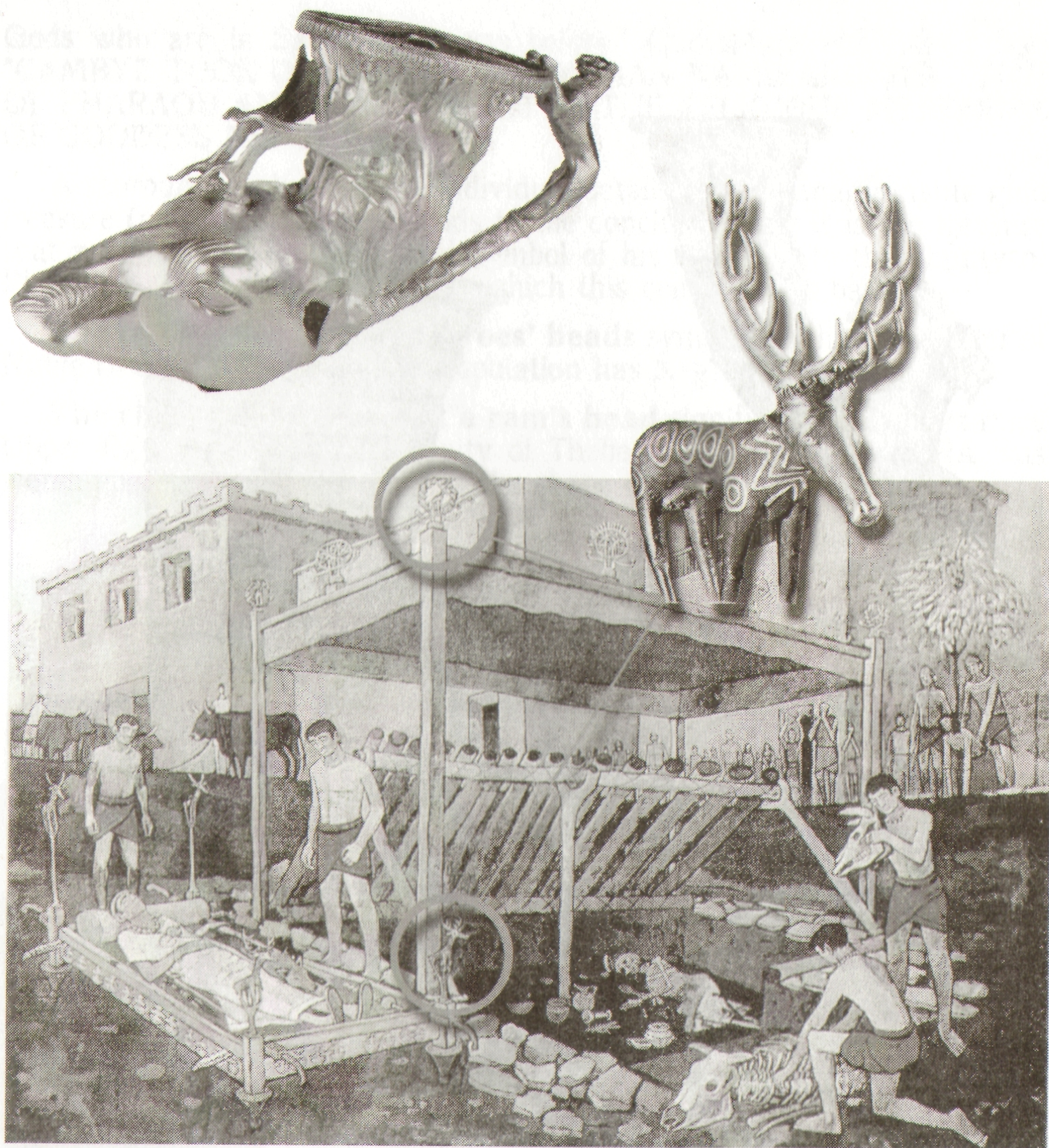


Fig. 5. Golden rhyton in the form of stag's head from Panagyurishte. Reconstruction of a royal funeral from Aladja Hüyük, Central Anatolia. Around the deceased and on the canopy is the sign of royal dignity - the stag (by S. Lloyd).

The two rhytons in the form of a stag's head symbolize Cambyz as the sovereign of Asia Minor and Iran. In these regions the deer, being the main object of hunting, was worshipped as a holy animal¹¹ (Fig. 5).



Fig. 6. Rhyton's handle from Panagyurishte treasure in shape of lion - symbol of Persian king power. Gold-lion rhyton which belonged to a Persian king, Vth century BC, Souza.

The three rhytons shaped as female's heads indicate that he also rules the Greek cities along the Asia Minor coast. On the back side of two of the heads one can see stars and lines, a symbol of the initial cosmic base from which Ghea and Rhea created the world, the titans and gods of the Greek Pantheon. The third head, which has a forehead protector, belongs to Athena Palada. To retaliate for the imposed restrictions, the Hellenic jewellers from the Greek merchant colony Naucratis replaced the head of Zeus with two Gorgons; the symbols of vengeance and derangement (which they deliberately attributed to Cambyz¹²).

Some other very important testimonies can be found on the rhytons' handles. Three of them are winged sphinxes and symbolize the power of Pharaoh. The other three are lions, symbols of the Persian royal power¹³ (Fig. 6). The drinking apertures are also designed as lion heads. The small



Fig. 7. Deep-relief gold cup from Vaffio, about XVth century BC (S. Hood). Totally following the Minoan-Mycenian style and jeweller's art. In later periods, under Dorhian pressure, it was transferred in Miletos, Samos and other Greek cities in Asia Minor. The 6th Egyptian dynasty granted these cities the privilege to found merchant and artisan colonies along the Nile estuary, such as Naukratis, etc.

rhyton with two Negroid heads on its handle and two small lion heads for simultaneous drinking of khaoma was used for mutual oath declaration. The scenes with human figures on the vessels depict Hellenic motives (e.g. the one on the small rhyton is from "The Seven against Thebes").

The exceptional artistic mastery of the set is related to the jewelry traditions inherited from the Minoan-Mycenian period. It is particularly similar to the art displayed on the two gold Mycenian cups found near Vaffio¹⁴ (Fig. 7,8). A hard wax base was used to model the set. Its weight is 1/4 Persian talant of 23-carat gold (Nubian).



Fig. 8. Deep-relief gold cup from Vaffio, about XVth century BC. The scenes on the cups depict hunting of the bulls.

After the death of Cambyz in 523, his Pharaoh gold set went in the treasury of Darius I, however he couldn't use it due to religious reasons related to the monotheism he was striving to impose in his Empire, the cult to Akhouramis, and thus to contribute for its consolidation. The favourable chance to use this treasure, an exceptional work of art, appeared when the Odrisian tribal chief was raised to royal rank.

The gold (1/2 Persian talant) and the idea embodied in the Vulchitrūn treasure also belong to Darius I. In favour of this is the white gold or "electron" used to impart more strength to the triple spoon. This natural gold-silver alloy was yielded only from the river of Sardi, the one-time capital city of the Lydian Kingdom.

Considered not only as works of art, but in the first place as official document and by the role they were intended to play, the value of the two treasures can be regarded as tremendous in view of the abundant light they throw on some important events of ancient times.

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